If credit were to be received in the forest accounts for the grass from reserved forests in the Poona Division, which is supplied to the Commissariat Department for the use of battery and cavalry horses, Transport animals and other Government cattle belonging to the Military Department, the surplus revenue of the Northern Circle would benefit by an additional sum of at least Rs. 25,000, for some of the best grass-producing reserved forests in the neighbourhood of Poona are assigned to the Commissariat Department for the supply of grass. A Pársi firm of contractors cuts the grass, transports it and delivers it at the several stables and yards in Poona and Kirkee. The contractor is required to deliver a stated weight of grass from all the reserved forests, and any grass that may be outturned over and above the contract quantity becomes the property of the contractor. It is possible that under such arrangement the Commissariat Department may obtain grass at a comparatively low rate, and that the Commissariat Contractor's profits may be very considerable; and at the same time it is not improbable that the grass revenue sacrificed by Government in the Forest Department may exceed the value of the gain in the Military Department over what would be the cost of an equal quantity of grass obtained in the open market. Villagers are complaining of the closure of sources of fodder grass supply by the grass alienation to the Commissariat Department against their agricultural cattle. Departmental cutting, transport and delivery of the grass, whether undertaken by the Forest or the Commissariat Department, would not, it may be assumed, prove satisfactory. But there seems no good reason why the Commissariat should not purchase in the open market, by inviting tenders for the supply, grass in the same way as they purchase firewood and other stores. And the Conservator ventures to believe that recourse to public competition without requiring certain reserved forests to be specially assigned for Military grass supply would be productive of considerable financial advantage.

CHAPTER VI.

GENERAL REMARKS.

212. At the commencement of the year the Conservator's camp was at Pálghar in the Máhím range of the North Thána division. Mr. Wilkins, the Divisional Forest Officer, and Mr. Fry, the Divisional Forest Officer, Working Plans, were with him. The Collector of the District was met in camp at Máhím when forest matters were discussed. From Pálghar the Conservator marched with these two officers through the Máhím and Bassein ranges, and on the way many compartments were visited, and the operations of the contractors in exploiting timber out of the coupes were inspected. The contractors complained of the difficulty experienced by them in obtaining labour and carriage for the felling of trees and the removal of wood, and of the small local demand; they attributed much of this to the departmental competition in local supply, whereby coast villagers, instead of going to the coupes for their requirements in forest produce, obtained permits from the Forest Department, mostly upon specially favoured rates, and drew their supplies direct from the forests, employing local labour and carriage for the extraction and transport of the material.

213. After leaving the North Thána division the Conservator proceeded into the Karjat range of South Thána, and the Divisional Forest Officer, Mr. Millett, encamped with him at Dhamot near Neral, where they were joined by the Divisional Forest Officer, Working Plans, and were employed up to the middle of May in inspecting the forests upon the northern slopes of the Mátherán range, and the allotments which had been made to the Thákurs for "rán cultivation" upon the terraces. It was found that these men, although they had been employed on wages in constructing special forest boundary-marks to demarcate in a clear unmistakeable and detailed manner, the boundaries of their allotments, and of the reserved forests, which were conterminous, and could have no misunderstanding regarding the boundaries, had encroached with their "shifting cultivation" upon the reserved forests, and had made clearings by the axe and fire. The Conservator with the Divisional Forest Officers visited the Col-

lector of Thána on Mátherán to represent the proceedings of the Thákurs, and to discuss forest matters generally. It was finally decided that heavy assessment should be taken from the Thákurs for the plots they had cleared in the forests, and that they should be warned against a repetition of the offence.

214. Leaving the Thána District, the Conservator proceeded to Khandála in the Poona Collectorate, when Mr. Wroughton, the Divisional Forest Officer, Poona, joined his camp, and up to the end of the month the surrounding forests were inspected daily; the work of building special forest boundary-marks for the demarcation of their boundaries was in progress. Finally when thunderstorms heralding the coming monsoon commenced upon the Western Ghâts, the Conservator moved his camp to the head-quarters station, Poona, for the rainy season.

215. In the month of November, the Conservator was out in camp in the Bhimthadi Táluka of the Poona division at Rájegaon, a village on the banks of the Bhima river: there had been a deficient and unseasonable rainfall in the Deccan, and closed forests not including plantations had been thrown open to cattle, and it was desirable that the effects should be observed. The Divisional Forest Officer, Ahmednagar, Mr. Mainwaring, joined the Conservator's camp, Rájegaon, being on the borders of the Poona and Ahmednagar Collectorates. Some reserves in the Karjat range were visited and the Divisional Office and records were examined. In the villages of Rájegaon and Náigaon there are large areas of waste lands, some of which adjoin existing forest reserves, covered with an advanced and valuable growth of bábul trees, and it is very desirable that the present tree-growth should be preserved in this arid part of the country, which probably is visited by less rain than any other portion of the Eastern Deccan. Leaving Bhimthadi Táluka and inspecting on his way the forests in the Indápur and Málsiras range, and of Piliw in the Akalkot State, the Conservator proceeded into the Sángola range of the Sholápur division, where he was met by Mr. Hornidge, the Divisional Forest Officer, Sholápur, and forest reserves were inspected in the Sángola, Pandharpur and Mádha ranges, Mr. Hornidge being in company. The Conservator returned to Poona for the Christmas vacation, during which time the camp was moved, and in January the Conservator proceeded into the Bhiwndi Táluka of the South Thána division, where he was joined by Mr. Millett, the Divisional Forest Officer, and the several coupes in the range which were being worked by contractors and purchasers were visited. Mr. T. B. Fry, Divisional Forest Officer, Working Plans, who was engaged in completing the differentiation of the forests of the Bhiwndi range into blocks and compartments, also met the Conservator and blocks and compartments were visited daily, and the operations of the surveyors were examined. Mr. Wilkins, the Divisional Forest Officer, North Thána, joined the camp in the Bassein range, and accompanied the Conservator in inspections of forests and coupes in this and in the Váda ranges of North Thána. During the month of February the forests of, and the compartments under the axe, in the Váda, Sháhápur and Khardi ranges were inspected; the Tánsa Lake under construction and portion of the duct line from Tánsa Lake to Bombay was visited, and the contractors were interviewed regarding the supplies of timber and firewood they are drawing from the Government forests. Some of the coupes which have been specially marked out for them were examined and then parting from his office near Kására the Conservator marched into the Mokháda range to Suryamal, and was rejoined by his office at Mokháda; and after inspecting the forests and works in this mountainous range, and the new road-making from Váda up the Shirghát to the Deccan, the Conservator marched into the Násik division by way of the A'mboli Ghát, and encamped at Trimbak, when the forests at the head waters of the Godávari river were examined. Bamboos are growing freely and well in these forests. Mr. Betham, the Divisional Forest Officer, Násik, joined the Conservator at Mahiráwni, and travelled with him through forests in the Igatpuri range, visiting plantations, &c. And once more parting from his office at Bhawli, as there was no cart road through the Ghát country, the Conservator walked through the forests of the Akola range of the Ahmednagar division on the eastern slopes of the Western Ghâts, and on the 31st of March his camp was pitched at Ambit in the Akola Dángs.

216. During his tour the Conservator examined the Divisional Forest Offices of North and South Thána, Working Plans, Poona, Ahmednagar, Sholápur and Násik, and he was satisfied with the state and condition in which he found them. The Conservator can safely say that a great development is taking place in the forests of the Northern Circle, and their value is augmenting rapidly and steadily despite the exercise of privileges which are very destructive in certain portions which are more accessible to markets, bandars and railway stations of export, and to large towns. Protection against illicit fellings is very good indeed, and against fire, in the face of the many difficulties to be contended against, is on the whole highly satisfactory in the more civilized districts. The plan of throwing open to cattle closed forests whenever the monsoon rains may be delayed in their arrival, or grass outside of forest areas may be scarce is fatal to reboisement. There is very little grass at such times in the closed forests and the advantages that cattle receive by their admission into these closed tracts are more imaginary than real, except in so far that crops of ligneous seedlings are browsed down and afford a mouthful here and there. In at least one year out of three is the request made to open closed forests to cattle, and if the reboisement of the denuded hill lands of the Deccan is not so rapid or satisfactory as desired, the reason is the irregular way in which cattle are let into forest areas under treatment for reboisement from which they ought to be excluded rigidly and constantly for a term of years.

217. The Working Plan arrangements in the Thána Collectorate have been productive of much good; they have resulted in, amongst other advantages, establishing a local trade all over the district. The Collector, Mr. Vidal, who was President of the late Forest Commission, has recorded in the Thána Collector's No. 2524 of the 11th April 1889 :—

"The undersigned has received no complaints of any kind during his tour in the coast villages of Bassein, Máhím and Dáhánu, either of insufficiency of local supplies of timber and firewood or of too high prices being demanded by contractors. The local trade, which is now fast establishing itself, will certainly render departmental distribution unnecessary in future years. The progress thus made appears to have been very rapid and could not have been predicted with any certainty three or four years ago. It is none the less satisfactory."

And the Divisional Forest Officer, Mr. Wilkins, in his diary for the 19th March, has noted :—

"It is pleasing to see how kindly the villagers on the coast and elsewhere are taking to getting their timber and firewood from the contractors in preference to depending on the old custom of looking to the Sirkár to supply their wants departmentally."

218. The two Divisional Forest Officers of the Thána Collectorate, Messrs. Wilkins and Millett, and Mr. T. B. Fry, the Divisional Forest Officer, Working Plans, deserve much praise for the excellent work they have performed in this district, for their constant devotion to duty and their untiring industry.

219. The Conservator has much pleasure in testifying to the good work done by all the superior Forest Officers in his Circle, who deserve much credit for the intelligence, energy, zeal and activity with which they have administered their respective charges.

220. The two Khándesh Divisional Officers, Messrs. Desái and Fagan, have earned the praise of the Collector, Mr. Loch, C.S., who remarks in forwarding the report of Mr. Desái that :—

"Mr. Desái has moved actively about his charge and has done his best to make himself acquainted with a district very unlike to the one in which he had served for many years. His report shows that he has administered his division successfully, and there is no reason to doubt that if he remains in charge both the revenue and the work of the subordinates will improve."

And in forwarding Mr. Fagan's report he states :—

"Mr. Fagan's administration report is the record of a year's honest and successful work, successful mainly through the devotion which Mr. Fagan has displayed to his duty and to the energetic way in which he has made himself acquainted with his large charge and supervised the work of his subordinates. This he has done at the cost of a good deal of illness and discomfort to himself. The undersigned feels certain that he need say no more on this point, as he knows that Mr. Shuttleworth appreciates Mr. Fagan's value as a Divisional Forest Officer."

221. In addition to the abovementioned officers, Mr. Wroughton in Poona, Mr. Mainwaring in Ahmednagar, Mr. W. G. Betham in Násik, Mr. Hexton in Surat, Mr. Keys in the Panch Mahál, Mr. Greatheed in Sátára, and Mr. Hornidge in the Sholápur division have, one and all, co-operated heartily with the Conservator, and have earned his warmest acknowledgments, and it is only fitting that he should record the fact in this administration report.

222. The Commissioner of the Central Division, Mr. Moore, takes the greatest interest in forest matters, and is a warm supporter of forest conservancy; and it has given the Conservator much gratification to hear from Mr. Moore that he has observed great improvement in the vegetation covering the hills in parts of the Deccan since his last visit to these places some years ago.

223. The Conservator must also record his obligation to the Collectors generally in the Northern Circle, who are ever ready to consider his representations, and to give all assistance in their power to the department. Mr. Loch is a tower of strength to the forest administration in Khándesh, and Messrs. Waddington, East, Keyser, and Campbell have done very much for forest conservancy in the Ahmednagar, Poona, Sátára and Panch Mahál districts: without the cordial assistance of the Collectors and of their Assistants, successful management of the forests would be a matter of great difficulty.

224. Colonel Pullan, the Superintendent of forest surveys, has been very obliging, and both he and his subordinates have performed good serviceable work for this department, at the expense of much physical labour and discomfort, for the forest country which they are required to survey is rugged and mountainous; and they deserve high commendation for their industry. The forest maps which they have produced furnish evidence of the highest skill, care and precision; and these maps are valuable, not only for forest, but for purposes of the general administration.

225. Of Sub-Assistant Conservators, the following officers have been specially mentioned by the Divisional Forest Officers under whom they have served for the conscientious and enrgetic manner in which they have performed their duties:—

Messrs. A. R. Maidment and J. H. Clabby in North Thána division.

Mr. R. H. Madan, Acting Assistant Conservator in South Thána.

Mr. G. S. Hinge in West Khándesh.

Mr. W. A. Wallinger in Násik.

Mr. W. R. Gaunde in Poona.

226. Of the Range Forest Officers upon whom devolves the greatest responsibility, and the brunt of the executive work, the following have distinguished themselves:—

Shekh Abbas Shekh Ali.

Hasanali Mahomedali.

Joseph Baptista, L.C.E.

Govind Ramchandra Takle, who has administered a very difficult range with great credit to himself and satisfaction to his superiors.

Abdul Rasul Khajbaksh.

Ramchandra Raoji Bodwadkar.

Vishnu Mahadew Tilak.

Balaji Dhondadeo Dhekne.

Walabhram Mulji Bhat.

227. The office establishment of the Conservator, as well as of Divisional Forest Officers, have performed their duties in a highly satisfactory manner; and the thanks of the Conservator are due to Messrs. Krishnaji Babaji Phadke, Keshav Ganesh Vaidya, Krishnaji Vyankatesh Lohokare, Madharao Narayan Gokhale, as well as to all other clerks in his office, and to Messrs.

Shivram Bhikaji Rangnekar, Trimbak Bhikaji Lawhate, Damodar Tukaram, Nimbraj Keshao Chandekar, and Taimbak Govind Mahajan in the divisional offices.

228. During the year under report eight students joined the Forest Class attached to the College of Science, Poona, and one passed the final examination in September 1888. Mr. T. B. Fry, Divisional Forest Officer, Working Plans, gave, as has already been stated, a series of lectures in Forestry to the Forest Class in the College of Science during the rains; and it is much to be regretted that the Forestry lectures cannot be continuous throughout the several terms of the year, and the Conservator would submit that the time has arrived for special arrangement to be made whereby this advantage will be secured, for the proprietors of estates, Inámdárs as well as Native Chiefs, are awakening to an appreciation of the value of forest conservancy and to the desirability of bringing their forest properties under scientific management, and it is becoming apparent more and more every day that the maintenance and augmentation of the general prosperity of this country is dependent in a very great measure upon a widespreading system of approved forest conservancy.

A. T. SHUTTLEWORTH,
Conservator of Forests, Northern Circle.

Poona, 31st October 1889.